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Employee News

Smokey Bear and Handler Needed!

- ❑ Although VDOF has redirected its fair resources to local events, Smokey Bear will attend this year's State Fair! Smokey will move around the new natural resources location in the Farm Bureau Center (and possibly travel to other locations via courtesy cart.)
- ❑ ***One Smokey and one bear handler will be needed from 12 noon – 3 PM on each of the following dates: Sept. 25 and 26, Oct. 2 and 3.*** There will be space for changing in and out of the suit as often as needed during the work period, and separate suits will be available for Saturday and Sunday, per COVID guidelines. Please contact [Ellen Powell](#) if interested in helping. You'll receive a free ticket and parking pass to the fair.

Last Week

Fire and Emergency Response:

- ◆ Virginia Department of Forestry full-time and part-time personnel continue to be major contributors to the ongoing western wildfire emergency. Thus far in 2021, agency personnel have served tours of duty in 11 different states, including Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, California, North Carolina, and Delaware. These deployments have included service in these capacities:
 - Single Resource Overhead: YTD = 38 Current = 7
 - Crew Members: YTD = 29 Current = 4

- ◆ We have contributed to six hand crews and multiple overhead single resources to the western fire effort so far this year. A seventh hand crew composed of approximately 10 VDOF personnel is in the hopper ready to go in the next few days. Their deployment has been delayed by a 19 acre fire over the weekend near Pads Creek on USDA Forest Service (USFS) in Allegheny County.

Forestland Conservation

- ◆ Lara Johnson (U&CF program manager), Meghan Mulroy-Goldman and Kendall Topping (community forestry specialists), and Joe Lehnen (urban wood utilization forester) performed a tree inventory at Helping Hands Cemetery, a historic black cemetery in Courtland, Virginia. The project included inventorying all of the cemetery trees, prioritizing some of the trees for removal within the next year, and developing an urban wood plan for the potential use of wood from these trees in the cemetery and at a historic black community center.
- ◆ Lara Johnson helped deliver two rare and champion trees to the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at James Madison University (JMU) as part of the Archangel Champion Tree Project. A planting ceremony will be completed this fall.

State Forests

- ◆ Ailanthus spray control work was completed on about 1/3 of the Cumberland State Forest this past week using Eastern Forest Consultants as the contractor, funded by an Invasive Species Grant from Forest Health. All roads & open field areas within 100 feet of road or open field were treated. Areas of Ailanthus were also mapped.
- ◆ Shannon Lewis and Kirby Woolfolk (forest management specialists) attended the Cumberland County Board of Supervisors meeting and presented the county payment for revenues generated on State Forest lands within the County.
- ◆ Zach Olinger (forest management and education specialist) attended and set up an information booth at the Grayson County Fair and provided information to the public on VDOF services and State Forest management.
- ◆ Dennis Gaston finalized State Forest maps within the Eastern Region for posting onto the new website. Maps applied new consistency measures for all State Forest maps.

Eastern Region

- ◆ Last week, the Eastern Region hosted the final meeting (and first in-person meeting) of the New Employee Resource Group (NERG). This was a pilot program that was initiated during the pandemic to give new employees in the east a chance to meet others starting their VDOF journey and develop a sense of comradery between them. At each meeting, there was a guest speaker who told their story of how they came to the VDOF and gave advice about how to get involved and gain the most out of the VDOF experience. Thank you to all those who participated in this pilot program, Jack Coyler and Joshua Just (forest technicians); Kendall Topping and Eli Podyma (community forestry specialists); and to all the guest speakers, Jay Bassett (forest technician); Kathleen Ogilvy, Lisa Deaton and Jesse Bander (area foresters), and Heather Tuck (regional fire specialist). Thank you to Heather Dowling (senior area forester) for coming up with idea for this program and Lisa Burke (program support technician) for assisting with the logistics of putting together the meetings. (pictured)



- ◆ The Capital Team and Smokey Bear were invited again by PlanRVA (Richmond's regional planning commission) to showcase the Virginia Department of Forestry at a Richmond Flying Squirrels game. The Capital team



showed off one of the eastern region engines, answered questions about fire prevention, highlighted VDOF programs, spoke about daily VDOF operations, and handed out Smokey Bear giveaways. Smokey Bear was also invited to throw the ceremonial first pitch of the game in front of a crowd of 4500! (Pictured)



- ◆ Eli Podyma and Alanna Ostrowski (forest technician) represented VDOF at the West End Manor Civic Association's (WEMCA) National Night Out. During the event Eli and Alanna spoke to attendees about the daily operations of VDOF and were able to showcase a recent James River Buffer Program planting done for WEMCA. (Pictured)

- ◆ The Southampton County Fair kicked off on Wednesday August 11. The weather was very warm, in the low 90's with heat index numbers in the low 100 degree range. Fortunately, the Department of Forestry booth was set up in an air conditioned building at the fairgrounds! Over the next four days John Rose (forest technician), Evan Richardson, Stephen Jasenak (area foresters), Scott Bachman (senior area forester), Meghan Mulroy-Goldman and Kendall Topping met with citizens at the VDOF booth. The Smokey Plinko game was a popular attraction. We estimate that 500 or so citizens visited the booth to learn about the Virginia Department of Forestry and our natural resources.



- ◆ Kendall Topping, John Rose (forest technician), Stephen Jasenak (area forester) and Heather Tuck presented the True Story of Smokey Bear and a Wildland Fire Safety talk to approximately 20 campers at the year's second Fire Safety Camp, sponsored by the Suffolk Fire Department. The students got to see one of the agency fire suppression dozers and even meet Smokey Bear (pictured).



- ◆ Kendall Topping and Evan Richardson attended the Southampton National Night Out at the Southampton Fair Grounds last Tuesday. They had a transport and tractor as a display to entertain the audience. The threat of rain limited the crowd but a few folks got to see and listen to the VDOF fire prevention message.

- ◆ Stephen Jasenak, Evan Richardson and Scott Bachman presented the wildland portion of Fire Fighter I to the new recruit class of York County Fire and EMS on Thursday. The 11 recruits were put through their paces with fire rakes, Pulaskis and shovels in a forest of the Newport News Waterworks. It is great to be able to put a tractor on the ground and build a fire line in such an urbanizing area. The waterworks forestry staff has been a great partner in York fire trainings for many years. These fire fighters and the VDOF are the first responders on the over 13,000 acres of forest land that protects the water quality of the City of Newport News reservoirs. (pictured)



- ◆ Meghan Mulroy-Goldman attended the Hampton Road Planning District Coastal Resilience Master Plan Working Charrette. Among many other ideas and solutions for the challenges posed by sea level rise, Meghan's group discussed the importance of using trees as stormwater infrastructure. When asked

what the vision for Hampton Roads was in 50 years, the group's response was that in 50 years Hampton Roads will look like Hampton Roads, but with more trees! Special Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Adaptation and Protection, Ann Phillips, was very appreciative of VDOF's participation in the process.

- ◆ Doug Audley (area forester) represented VDOF at the observance of National Night Out held in Amelia County. The event was sponsored by the Amelia County Sheriff's Office with law enforcement agencies from the county and numerous state agencies including Virginia State Police, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, as well as all five county fire companies represented. A large crowd of county residents came to participate in the festivities which included a dunking booth, sack races, car show and other activities.

Central Region

- ◆ Zoë Sumrall (water quality specialist), Rodney Newlin (water quality engineer), Joe Rossetti (senior area forester) and Zoë Bergman (natural resource specialist) assisted with a SHARP Logger update class in Culpeper. Topics covered included forestry best management practices (BMP's), a brief overview of the VDOF's water quality program, notification and enforcement numbers, spotted lanternfly, fire ants, timber theft law, drone program, Pandemic Relief Program for Harvest Operators and Haulers being offered through the Farm Service Agency, Logging BMP Cost-Share, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan, 2020 BMP audit results, and a discussion of good and bad examples of BMP's. A representative from Forestry Mutual Insurance Company also gave a presentation on logging safety and lessons learned from previous accidents. A total of 12 loggers were in attendance.

Western Region

- ◆ Bill Sweeney (area forester) and Chris Thomsen (regional forester) both gave recent interviews to Roanoke's CBS affiliate WDBJ7 – the stories appeared on back-to-back evenings. Bill's story discussed VDOF personnel supporting the Western states' fire suppression and Chris' story covered the dry conditions in Southwest Virginia and the potential outlook for fall fire season. Links to both stories appear below:
 - [Franklin County Forester Assists with Western Wildfires](#)
 - [Fall Fire Potential Fuels Concern](#)
- ◆ David Bryan (forest technician) and Bill Sweeney attended a Franklin County Volunteer Fire Department (VFD)/Public Safety Chiefs meeting to discuss wildland fire and chainsaw safety with Franklin County officials. As a result, this meeting has led to planning a future VDOF-led four-hour chainsaw safety course for interested volunteer firefighters, and the purchase of proper chainsaw personal protective equipment (PPE) by the county for each volunteer fire station.

Public Information

- ◆ Cindy Frenzel (project learning tree [PLT] coordinator) and Ellen Powell (conservation education coordinator) conducted a PLT K-8 and Early Childhood workshop for 18 teachers at the CBI Forest School in Charlottesville. This school serves children 18 months through fourth grade and operates primarily outdoors throughout the school year.

News Clips

- ◆ [Virginia forestry crews heading west to help battle wildfires](#)
- ◆ [Virginia sends crews to help fight wildfires in West](#)
- ◆ [Virginia forestry staff head west to help fight historic blazes](#)

- ◆ [Virginia Dept. of Forestry staff fighting western flames-NBC29](#)
- ◆ [Virginia Dept. of Forestry staff fighting western flames-WHSV3](#)
- ◆ [VDOF sends personnel to the west to help battle fires](#)
- ◆ [Board to consider harvesting timber at two county-owned properties](#)
- ◆ [Northern Virginia Conservation Trust acquires easement in Clifton](#)
- ◆ [Virginia Deploys Crew to Combat Western Wildfires](#)
- ◆ [City trees are as under threat as our forests](#)